

## Introduction

Through our long-term, comprehensive program model, SEA programs address students' mental health needs by providing key protective factors such as caring adult mentors, healthy peer relationships, physical activity, and a sense of oneself as a competent person. Just relying on these protective factors to support students, however, is not enough. Programs need to plan for how they will address students' more acute mental health and social support needs. When a student shares information with a staff member that raises concerns about the student's need for additional mental health support or social services, staff should be prepared for how to respond. At a minimum, they should have some basic training and clear next steps for who they can reach out to for additional support and guidance.

## Overview

This guide shares information about what resources programs should have in place to address students' more acute mental health and social service needs.

### **Level 1: The Basics**

- Train staff
- Know local resources & places for referral
- Provide regular coaching and supervision to staff

### **Level 2: Additional Investments**

- Provide additional staff training
- Lead social-emotional programming for students

### **Level 3: Formal Partnerships and Systems of Support**

- Partner with local community organizations or universities
- Have a social worker on staff

## Level 1: The Basics

All organizations should have the following basic things in place to address students' mental health needs.

**Train staff:** All staff should receive training in the following topics -

- Mandated reporting of abuse & neglect
- Self-harm assessments
- Suicide assessments

**Know local resources & places for referral:** Organizations should be aware of the resources

available in their states and local communities (schools, health centers, hospitals, nonprofits, etc.), both for additional training and so that, if/when additional resources are needed, the organization is able access them quickly. Staff should know who or what organizations they can call when emergency situations arise.

**Provide regular coaching and supervision to staff:** Staff members who supervise other staff should ask about students' social-emotional health as part of their regular check-ins with staff.

## Level 2: Additional Investments

Organizations that are interested in investing more in students' social-emotional health might consider the following options.

**Provide additional staff training:** Organizations can find or develop additional staff trainings related to students' social-emotional health, and mandate staff participation in at least some of these trainings. For example, staff members might receive additional training in positive youth development, trauma-sensitive youth work, sex education, parent support, or conflict resolution/mediation.

**Lead social-emotional programming for students:** Organizations can offer social-emotional programming such as groups or meditation. Staff members can lead the programming themselves, and/or an outside organization, such as Planned Parenthood, can facilitate the programming.

## Level 3: Formal Partnerships and Systems of Support

Organizations that are committed to a more formal support system should consider the following options.

**Partner with Local Community Organization:** Organizations might partner with a local community health center or nonprofit that they can call with questions and counseling referrals.

**Partner with Universities:** Organizations might partner with a local university to bring in an MSW student who will work with students and families in individual counseling sessions or groups, and/or can connect families to other resources as needed.

**Have a Social Worker on Staff:** Organizations can hire a social worker to provide counseling, groups, and trainings for staff.

Note that hiring a social worker or bringing on an MSW student most likely will require that the organization also arrange for formal “supervision” of the social worker by a more experienced social worker.

### **Additional Resources**

- ❑ [To Write Love on Her Arms](#): Website that lists state-by-state local resources for responding to mental health emergencies.
- ❑ [Crisis Text Line](#): Free 24/7 support for students in crisis. Text 741741 from anywhere in the USA to text with a trained crisis counselor.
- ❑ [American Camping Association - Suicide Prevention Resources](#): Facts and resources for youth-serving organizations concerned about students' mental health.

*This guide was created by Sasha Diamond-Lowe of StreetSquash Harlem and Emily Chernick of Capitol Squash.*